

[BEGIN AUDIO]

MR. DANIEL MARTINEZ: The subject is Mr. Lonie Copeland. The interviewer is Mr. Daniel Martinez, Historian for the National Parks Service. This oral history project is a cooperative effort of the United States Navy, ComNavBase Pearl Harbor, Barbers Point Naval Air Station, the State of Hawaii Historic Preservation Division and the National Parks Service. Lonie if you'd look right over here.

LONIE LEE COPELAND: Alright.

MR. MARTINEZ: Could you please state for me your full name?

MR. COPELAND: Lonie Lee Copeland.

MR. MARTINEZ: And your age?

MR. COPELAND: 72.

MR. MARTINEZ: And your current address.

MR. COPELAND: Route 4, Box 162-A, Tylertown, Mississippi.

MR. MARTINEZ: And how old are you?

MR. COPELAND: 72.

MR. MARTINEZ: And what year and date were you born?

MR. COPELAND: October 16, 1920.

MR. MARTINEZ: And where did you grow up?

MR. COPELAND: Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

MR. MARTINEZ: And your early years, what town did you live in?

MR. COPELAND: Livingston, Louisiana and Tylertown, Mississippi.

MR. MARTINEZ: How many in your family?

MR. COPELAND: They, my brother, youngest brother and me and two sisters living.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you the oldest?

MR. COPELAND: I'm the oldest.

MR. MARTINEZ: Your Mom and Dad were living all through your formative years?

MR. COPELAND: Yes. I had one brother died while I was in the South Pacific at 27 and one sister got killed two years after I got back in 1944.

MR. MARTINEZ: I see. Where did you go to high school at?

MR. COPELAND: I didn't go to high school.

MR. MARTINEZ: Want to tell me about that?

MR. COPELAND: I had to plow mules from sunup to sundown.

MR. MARTINEZ: You were a farm boy?

MR. COPELAND: That's right.

MR. MARTINEZ: Okay, when did you enlist in the Marine Corps?

MR. COPELAND: September the 18th, 1939.

MR. MARTINEZ: And why did you enlist?

MR. COPELAND: I liked the uniform and liked the Marine Corps, they way the looked.

MR. MARTINEZ: Why didn't you join any other services?

MR. COPELAND: Didn't like them.

MR. MARTINEZ: Where do you go to Boot Camp?

MR. COPELAND: San Diego, California.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you arrived at San Diego, did, what did you think of those Drill Instructors?

MR. COPELAND: They were tough.

MR. MARTINEZ: Was it tougher than you thought it was going to be?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes. But I made it alright.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now, you're from the South, did they give you any extra treatment?

MR. COPELAND: No. I got gigged one time in Boot Camp.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was that all about?

MR. COPELAND: I don't know, I forgot.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did they do to you?

MR. COPELAND: Made me do about 75 push ups.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was the toughest part of your training in Boot Camp, in your view?

MR. COPELAND: Marching all day. And handling that rifle.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now you're a farm boy, were you a pretty good shot?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes, I was excellent.

MR. MARTINEZ: And did you qualify that way in the Marine Corps, as an Expert?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Expert.

MR. MARTINEZ: Okay, after you were done with Boot Camp, where did you go next?

MR. COPELAND: I stayed there 22 months. I helped organize the first Defense Battalion that went to Wake. I helped organize the second, went to the East Coast, Camp Lejeune, I helped organize the tenth and came to Pearl Harbor in July '41, then I came out here from Pearl Harbor on the USS Chester, a Heavy Cruiser. I landed here August 11, '41.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of this place when you first saw it?

MR. COPELAND: My heart went to the bottom. It sunk. My morale hit bottom.

MR. MARTINEZ: You didn't like Midway?

MR. COPELAND: Not at first.

MR. MARTINEZ: What didn't you like about it?

MR. COPELAND: Nothing. Wasn't nothing here.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was here?

MR. COPELAND: Goony birds.

MR. MARTINEZ: And a lot of sand.

MR. COPELAND: Sand and goony birds, that's all.

MR. MARTINEZ: Those sounds we're hearing are goony birds, aren't they?

MR. COPELAND: Yes.

MR. MARTINEZ: What were you assigned to? You landed right here on Sand Island?

LLC: Yes, I was stationed [video skips] and helped dig in the searchlights on Sand Island. Then September '42, the rest of the Battalion came out and my outfit was on Eastern, so they sent me out on Eastern Island.

MR. MARTINEZ: Where were you and how did you hear the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

MR. COPELAND: They came to our tents and told us.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of all that?

MR. COPELAND: Didn't have time to think. We double time out to our positions. Sand bagged in and ready to fire.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you ready for war?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you mad?

MR. COPELAND: I was cool, calm and collected.

MR. MARTINEZ: So you were ready for the Japanese if they decided to pay a visit.

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. I got my share.

MR. MARTINEZ: They did pay a visit?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes.

MR. MARTINEZ: Can you tell me about that, what you say that night on December 7th?

MR. COPELAND: Well I saw, we saw gunfire about 8 or 10 miles out at sea. And the shells was coming over our heads. And then they ceased fired, because our guns wouldn't reach that far. And a few minutes later they opened up again and got closer. And we got the word to come in firing.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now were you with the battery or the search light then?

MR. COPELAND: I was with battery. I was gunner on three inch.

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MR. MARTINEZ: What battery was that?

MR. COPELAND: [phonetic] Peasy Battery.

MR. MARTINEZ: And was that here on Sand Island?

MR. COPELAND: No I was Eastern.

MR. MARTINEZ: You were then at Eastern.

MR. COPELAND: Right.

MR. MARTINEZ: Okay so you went over there in '41, not '42.

MR. COPELAND: I went over there in September '41.

MR. MARTINEZ: I see, okay. Did you guys let loose a round at them?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah. We had, our gun pit was half full of empty shells.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you hit them, or?

MR. COPELAND: I don't know. You can't look when you firing a gun.

MR. MARTINEZ: Okay. Did you see the gunfire falling over here on this island? Did you see it hit stuff or were you just too busy to see what was going on. Or could you even see this island from there?

MR. COPELAND: I saw the PBY Hangar get hit and oil drums [video skips] was taking off two or three of them wrecked, hit and buzz and the pilots got killed. They all went back to Honolulu, Pearl Harbor that night.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of your first action at war time?

MR. COPELAND: Not too much.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you scared?

MR. COPELAND: I was scared that night. After we ceased fire, we had to walk the beach and meet another sentry and turn around and come back. But I carried my rifle at forward arms in case a Jap cut my throat I could get off one round to warn my buddies. I think I could have got one round off.

MR. MARTINEZ: That's what you were thinking, huh?

MR. COPELAND: Yes.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you find out later that some people had been killed over here?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you feel about that?

MR. COPELAND: Bad feeling. I had two good buddies got killed at June the 4th.

MR. MARTINEZ: Oh later in the battle at Midway. But not that night.

MR. COPELAND: Not that night, no.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was it like around here after December 7th? What was happening? How did the peace time day-to-day duties change?

MR. COPELAND: Well, they kept us busy. We had to man the phones on the guns day and night. So we stood guard duty day and night. Plus work. We was working and practicing firing our guns when we wasn't walking on guard duty.

MR. MARTINEZ: Where did you sleep at night?

MR. COPELAND: Bunker.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you like that?

MR. COPELAND: Well, better than sleeping on the ground.

MR. MARTINEZ: The Japanese came back a couple, brought submarines in and fired at the Island. Did you get a chance to fire at them at all?

MR. COPELAND: Oh we fired at every one of those. They'd get about two rounds off or three, and we'd open up and either sink them or they'd submerge.

MR. MARTINEZ: What do you think they were doing out there, feeling out your defenses?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Finding out where all our guns were located.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you ever move your guns?

MR. COPELAND: No.

MR. MARTINEZ: Just kept them where they were.

MR. COPELAND: Stationary.

MR. MARTINEZ: What kind of things did you do over here to break the boredom?

MR. COPELAND: Well I worked out with a buddy of mine from Illinois and he made a Battlefield Commission. We worked out on the horizontal bars and then I was on the boxing team. And November the 10th '41 I boxed here on Sand Island.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you do?

MR. COPELAND: I won.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you knock him out or win by decision?

MR. COPELAND: Decision. I had 60 fights and won them all.

MR. MARTINEZ: What weight division were you?

MR. COPELAND: Middle weight, 160 pounds.

MR. MARTINEZ: Would you have considered yourself pretty tough?

MR. COPELAND: Pretty tough.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you like so much about boxing?

MR. COPELAND: It was born in me. I started out in the third grade in school in Louisiana. Our school would box other schools and I joined the CC Camp when I was 17, me and a bunch of my buddies and I boxed in the CC Camps. Then I boxed in the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: Who was your favorite boxer as you were growing up?

MR. COPELAND: Billy Con.

MR. MARTINEZ: And do you still keep up with boxing?

MR. COPELAND: Yes. Not much now.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you watch boxing after the war or follow it there with Marciano and those people.

MR. COPELAND: I followed Marciano.

MR. MARTINEZ: Pretty tough.

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah, he could go.

MR. MARTINEZ: Okay we'll do a reel change. They're going to change tape.

MR. COPELAND: Alright.

MR. MARTINEZ: Lonie, after the war starts, you were sent over to Eastern Island and had operated your Battery there, A Battery, three inch gun mounts. Can you describe to me exactly what a three inch gun could do and what's its range?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah. That projectile traveled 2700 feet per second and it would reach, I guess, 20,000 feet. It was also a good surface. It is artillery too.

MR. MARTINEZ: So it had dual purpose.

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, right.

MR. MARTINEZ: If you were to go back and try to visualize, could you describe to me what your Battery looked like over on Eastern Island?

MR. COPELAND: Well we had four guns. Each battery three inches had four guns and we had trained two years in San Diego. So we was all, we had been together two years and we didn't make any mistakes. You get 15 rounds a minute, you're putting them in there.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did the battery look like? I mean was it sand bagged?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah, we were sand bagged around so high, then an outlet to our bunker to go to the bunker.

MR. MARTINEZ: How many men did it take to operate this three inch gun?

MR. COPELAND: Let's see gunner, the loader, azimuths, reader an elevation man, a fuse cutter and three or four ammunition men.

MR. MARTINEZ: And what did you do on the gun?

MR. COPELAND: I was gunner. I pulled the trigger.

MR. MARTINEZ: You like that?

MR. COPELAND: I loved it.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were these guns very loud?

MR. COPELAND: Oh you better believe it.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you do to protect your ears?

MR. COPELAND: Cotton. Had to use cotton in our ears.

MR. MARTINEZ: Well let's talk about the events leading up to the battle of Midway. Was there anything unusual happening during that time? Were reinforcements arriving? Can you describe the events leading up to the battle of Midway?

MR. COPELAND: Yes. We were, we knew three weeks ahead of time that the Japs was coming. Didn't know when. And we got reinforced the 3rd Defense Battalion and two companies out of Radio Battalion and got some B-17s in, bummers.

MR. MARTINEZ: Had you ever seen a B17 before?

MR. COPELAND: Yes. But they didn't do much damage. It was dive bombers that done it.

MR. MARTINEZ: Yeah.

MR. COPELAND: And torpedo planes.

MR. MARTINEZ: When the battle of Midway, can you describe to me what your day was like, how it started on June 4, 1942, the day of the battle of Midway?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. They hit us about 6:30 or 7:00 that morning. The Japanese bombers coming in, so we opened fire soon as they got in range.

MR. MARTINEZ: What kind of range were they at?

MR. COPELAND: I guess it was about 15,000 feet. 10,000 or 15,000 feet. We could see them and we could also see our fighter planes hitting them, hitting the bummers too.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now your battery is real active during this time?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah. Yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: You were throwing rounds up? Did your batter hit anybody?

MR. COPELAND: I think we shot down quite a few.

MR. MARTINEZ: That morning were you up early?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, yes. Well when we have, we was on them guns in a minute.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now during that war time, I understand that you guys got up about an hour before sunset and manned your guns. Was that true?

MR. COPELAND: Well we had a man on the gun all day and night with a phone.

MR. MARTINEZ: I see. How long did this battle last?

LLC: About two hours. Well the Japanese Zeroes came in so low we couldn't use the three inch, but we was firing our rifles.

MR. MARTINEZ: Is that right?

MR. COPELAND: At Zeroes.

MR. MARTINEZ: Could you see the pilot?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of all this?

MR. COPELAND: They were coming straight in on us.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of all of this stuff?

MR. COPELAND: Didn't have time to think, just firing.

MR. MARTINEZ: Now with the air assault done, did you think that the next thing that was going to happen was the invasion fleet was going to start landing?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. That's what we thought.

MR. MARTINEZ: Was that kind of nerve wracking?

MR. COPELAND: Pretty nerve wracking.

MR. MARTINEZ: In an early interview, someone told me that they told you to, told all the guys to get their personal things, photos and stuff and destroy them. Did that order come to you?

MR. COPELAND: I don't remember.

MR. MARTINEZ: I see. After the battle of Midway was over, it went on for a few more days, did you get word of what was actually going on out at sea?

MR. COPELAND: Not a thing.

MR. MARTINEZ: So you pretty much kept in the dark about a lot of things?

MR. COPELAND: A lot of it yes. We wasn't told anything - - .

MR. MARTINEZ: When did you know that it was going to be alright, that the Japanese weren't going to land?

MR. COPELAND: About three or four days. See we didn't know the Navy was out there to help us at all. We was in the dark.

MR. MARTINEZ: A lot of planes flying in and out during that time?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes. We didn't have many to come back from Midway, from Eastern Island. They all got shot down, shot at.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you ever have a chance to meet any of the aviators over there or talk with them?

MR. COPELAND: Yes, I talked to Major Henderson, dive bomber pilot. And he got, he got killed that day.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you feel about all this dying that was going on during this time?

MR. COPELAND: Bad feeling.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you sad?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Yeah because I had two buddies got killed that day.

MR. MARTINEZ: Who were those guys?

MR. COPELAND: Well I can't remember one. But one of them was Felix Curry got killed.

MR. MARTINEZ: He was a buddy you say. You palled around with him here?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah and in San Diego. We went on liberty together in San Diego.

MR. MARTINEZ: What kind of things did you do on liberty?

MR. COPELAND: Cut up, fight and drink. Get women.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was your favorite bar in San Diego?

MR. COPELAND: My favorite bar was Carl's on 16th Street. The Bloody Bucket on 16th Street and Sherman's uptown.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you ever get a chance to visit some of the ladies' parlors over there at all?

MR. COPELAND: The ladies?

MR. MARTINEZ: The cat houses?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah, they were run by the government. They had MPs on the door. They let five out and five in.

MR. MARTINEZ: Yeah? What was the cost of those?

MR. COPELAND: Two dollars a whack.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you get your whacks?

MR. COPELAND: Beg your pardon?

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you get your whacks in?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yes.

MALE VOICE 1: Describe that for us.

MR. MARTINEZ: Describe those.

MALE VOICE 1: Tell us what - - of the town was like - - in those places. I mean really, describe it, give me a picture.

MR. COPELAND: Of the bars?

MALE VOICE 1: Yeah, just you know if I had never been there in my life, I had never even heard of the bar, what was it like to the boy going in and having fun?

MR. COPELAND: A lot of fighting.

MR. MARTINEZ: Who did you fight with?

MR. COPELAND: Sailors. Sailors. Marines. Six Marines jumped on me and two of my buddies one night?

MR. MARTINEZ: Was that a mistake?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, they got cut up pretty bad.

MR. MARTINEZ: What were these, in these bars, what were they like? I mean were they loud, or what kind of, did they have lots of music?

MR. COPELAND: They had Western music and good looking women with boots and short skirts on. Sexy looking.

MR. MARTINEZ: I see.

MR. COPELAND: And I want to tell you one other thing. Got into it when a Sailor jumped on me because I kept playing the jukebox. And I whooped him and then Police got me and I kicked the doors open and got out the wagon and Captain Scott came down the jailhouse the next morning and got me in his convertible. Police told him, we don't want to see that man no more, he too rough.

MR. MARTINEZ: So you liked your liberty?

MR. COPELAND: I loved my liberty. Women, beer.

MR. MARTINEZ: And fighting?

MR. COPELAND: And fighting.

MR. MARTINEZ: Anything you wanted was in San Diego.

MR. COPELAND: That's right. I loved it.

MR. MARTINEZ: But you were out here at Midway, you must have missed that.

MR. COPELAND: Quite a bit.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you do for entertainment that came close?

MR. COPELAND: Where out here?

MR. MARTINEZ: Yes sir.

MR. COPELAND: I guess putting on boxing gloves and going a few rounds with my buddies and working out on horizontal bar.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you have a still going out here?

MR. COPELAND: A what?

MR. MARTINEZ: A still.

MR. COPELAND: No.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you get any of that torpedo liquor at all?

MR. COPELAND: I didn't drink it. Some of them drank it, but I didn't. Thought it was 290 proof.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you, how long did you stay out here at Midway?

MR. COPELAND: 13 months.

MR. MARTINEZ: And where did you go from [video skips]

MR. COPELAND: They'd pick two men off each gun in September of '42 and went back to Pearl Harbor and Camp Catlin we got a bunch of boots in from San Diego and formed the 10th Defense Battalion and shipped out in February '43 and went North of Guadalcanal and stayed there 'til some time in the fall of '43 and I caught the malaria fever there and the shingles broke out my from my naval to my spine.

MR. MARTINEZ: What was that broke out on you?

MR. COPELAND: Shingles.

MR. MARTINEZ: Shingles.

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, if t goes around you it kills you. Then we left there and went to [phonetic] Anoweetop.

MR. MARTINEZ: Pretty rough place.

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, Anoweetop.

MR. MARTINEZ: Can you describe what happened to you down there?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yeah. 1,000 of us volunteered to go ashore to help wipe out the Japs. They asked for 1,000 volunteers. And I volunteered, I was one of the 1,000 who volunteered.

MR. MARTINEZ: And how did you wipe them out?

MR. COPELAND: Rifles.

MR. MARTINEZ: Was it tough fighting?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Pretty tough.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you have any close calls while you were in this fighting?

MR. COPELAND: Pretty close.

MR. MARTINEZ: Can you describe to me what that was?

MR. COPELAND: Well I just beat them a little faster with the trigger, pulling the trigger.

MR. MARTINEZ: How close was the fighting?

MR. COPELAND: Say 100 yards.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you ever meet any of the Japanese in hand-to-hand combat at all?

MR. COPELAND: No. No not bayonet fighting at all.

MR. MARTINEZ: Where did you go from there?

MR. COPELAND: I left Anoweetop and went back to Pearl Harbor on an aircraft carrier. Went from Pearl back to San Diego and I had been gone three years and one day. And then I hadn't been home in four years. I got two furloughs out of six years in the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you like going home?

MR. COPELAND: Good, good.

MR. MARTINEZ: Can you describe to me some of the things that you got to do?

MR. COPELAND: Well I dated good looking women and drank my booze.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you get in some fights?

MR. COPELAND: No fights. No fighting.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did, when you came back to San Diego, where did they send you?

MR. COPELAND: Oh I was sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

MR. MARTINEZ: You went to North Carolina? Were you there until the end of the war?

MR. COPELAND: Right. Right. Yeah. I was training, I was Squad Leader, training to hit Japan when they dropped the atomic bomb.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you feel about the end of the war?

MR. COPELAND: I was glad it was over.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you guys celebrate at Camp Lejeune?

MR. COPELAND: Oh yea.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you do?

MR. COPELAND: Cut up. Drank. Party.

MALE VOICE 1: What a career.

MR. MARTINEZ: And chase women right?

MR. COPELAND: Chase women. I had the women in North Carolina.

MR. MARTINEZ: How's that?

MR. COPELAND: I had them in Ashbury, High Point, Raleigh, Goldsboro.

MR. MARTINEZ: Well, Lonie can I ask you this? Were you a bit of a ladies man?

MR. COPELAND: Well I don't know, but I got the women.

MR. MARTINEZ: What kind of women did you like?

MR. COPELAND: Slender, good built, pretty eyes, pretty lips, pretty hair, pretty legs.

MR. MARTINEZ: After World War II was over, did you finally get an idea how important the battle of Midway was in all of this?

MR. COPELAND: Yes. We knew that it was a turning point of the war. President Roosevelt said it was the turning point of the war, the battle of Midway.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did you feel about you being there?

MR. COPELAND: I was proud to be a part of it. I settled down after the war started and it didn't bother me too much about being out of it.

MR. MARTINEZ: Despite all that stuff you were missing on liberty.

MR. COPELAND: Right. But I settled down and I knew I had to stay, so it didn't bother me too much.

MR. MARTINEZ: I've asked some of the fellows this and I'm going to ask you. Was Midway a crossroad to your life? Did it change you?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: How did it change you?

MR. COPELAND: Well war changes everybody's lives.

MR. MARTINEZ: In what ways did it change your life?

MR. COPELAND: Made me meaner. I was scared to go in a bar when I got back. Scared I'd kill them with my fists. Kill a man with my hands. The thumb, you take your thumb, ram that through his brain.

MR. MARTINEZ: The stuff that you had learned in training, you were afraid that you might use on somebody.

MR. COPELAND: Right, right.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did that meanness slowly go away? How did you deal with it?

MR. COPELAND: I had to fight it. I had to watch myself in a bar. I was tried by another Marine after the war. He was in the Radio Battalion and I took his woman away from him so he challenged me to a fight. And he said let's strip off to the waist and play the jukebox and see who's the best. So I give my beer to the lady and I cut his face all to pieces. And I went to a hotel with his girlfriend.

MR. MARTINEZ: So after, how long did it take for all this to kind of mellow out for you?

MR. COPELAND: Oh, six, seven years.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did you get married after the war?

MR. COPELAND: Five times.

MR. MARTINEZ: Five times?

MR. COPELAND: (shaking his head yes)

MR. MARTINEZ: Why did you get married five times you think?

MR. COPELAND: I don't know. Things didn't go right so I would get a divorce, meet another one, shack up and get married again.

MR. MARTINEZ: Do you think Lonie you had trouble adjusting in peace time?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Yeah I did.

MR. MARTINEZ: Have you come to grips with all of this now in your old?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you came back to Midway, what did you think? What did you think of all this?

MR. COPELAND: Oh didn't know it. It wasn't like this when I landed.

MR. MARTINEZ: Were you disappointed?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah because there was no trees, just sand and bushes, when I got out here.

MR. MARTINEZ: What do you think you learned out of being in the Marine Corps and being here?

MR. COPELAND: It helped me a lot. I learned a lot. I taught myself a lot by being in the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: If you, did you have a son?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: Would you have wanted your son to go through what you went through?

MR. COPELAND: I'd want him to join the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: Would you want him to share any of the experiences you had?

MR. COPELAND: No.

MR. MARTINEZ: Why not?

MR. COPELAND: Well I just wouldn't.

MR. MARTINEZ: It was too painful?

MR. COPELAND: Pretty painful. Because I was sick with malaria fever and shingles and they wouldn't send me to a hospital. I still had fired a gun and then after I got back to Camp Lejeune, after a week I broke down with another attack of malaria fever and they sent me and 200 more Marines to Fort Eustace, Virginia for three months just to sleep, read and eat. And I gained my weight back there.

MR. MARTINEZ: Does recalling these times make you sad?

MR. COPELAND: No.

MR. MARTINEZ: Have any regrets?

MR. COPELAND: No. No. Not a one.

MR. MARTINEZ: You said something that kind of registered with me. I guess that the Marine Corps did change your character though, a little. Did it make you stronger?

MR. COPELAND: Well I was always in good shape, but I guess I got in better shape in the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: Did it make you mentally tough?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Yeah. Mentally and to be a good Marine you got to have a lot of common sense. Because you can have four years of college and you won't make it in the Marine Corps. If you don't have some common sense to go with that.

MR. MARTINEZ: Why did you come back to Midway?

MR. COPELAND: Well I wanted to come back and see what it looked like because I spent 13 months here and I'm just proud I came, got a chance to come back.

MR. MARTINEZ: Was it important to see all these other fellows?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah. Of course I didn't know any of them personally. All my buddies that I was with I hadn't seen since I left here in 1942.

MR. MARTINEZ: What do you think of these guys?

MR. COPELAND: They alright. Good guys.

MR. MARTINEZ: So in a sense maybe on this trip you're making new buddies?

MR. COPELAND: Yeah.

MR. MARTINEZ: Is that what the Marine Corps is all about?

MR. COPELAND: Yes it is.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you see that symbol of the Marine Corps, what does that do for you?

MR. COPELAND: Well I'm just proud I'm an ex-Marine. Because I wouldn't have been satisfied in the Air Force or the Army.

MR. MARTINEZ: Why not?

MR. COPELAND: Or the Navy. I just wouldn't. I wanted the Marine Corps.

MR. MARTINEZ: This hat you have on says "We'll hold Midway 'til Hell Freezes Over". Who said that?

MR. COPELAND: Colonel Shanner.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you think of the Colonel?

MR. COPELAND: I liked the Colonel and I liked my CO, Major MacMillan.

MR. MARTINEZ: What did you like about him?

MR. COPELAND: Well he was a good Officer.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you think of a good Officer what do you think of? What do you think exemplifies a good Officer? Can you describe that to me from an enlisted man's point of view?

LLC: Well it's all the way he treats his men and takes care of them and stuff like that. Like Sergeant would his men and company.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you retired from the Marine Corps, what did you retire at?

MR. COPELAND: Staff Sergeant.

MR. MARTINEZ: Is that important being a Sergeant to you?

LLC Yeah. I was proud to be a PFC. Took me two years to make PFC.

MR. MARTINEZ: It's important I guess for you to go Eastern Island really, because that's your Midway.

MR. COPELAND: Right, right.

MR. MARTINEZ: When you got to Eastern Island what are you going to look for?

MR. COPELAND: Well I want to go back where our guns was set up and maybe the bunkers is still there that we slept in and take some pictures.

MR. MARTINEZ: Would it be fair to say you've come back to Midway to come home a little?

MR. COPELAND: Right, some. Quite a bit.

MR. MARTINEZ: A lot of memories here?

MR. COPELAND: Lot of memories.

MR. MARTINEZ: What is your fondest memory of Midway?

MR. COPELAND: Leaving. Going back Pearl Harbor.

MR. MARTINEZ: And what is your worst memory of Midway?

MR. COPELAND: All, landing here. My morale sunk.

MR. MARTINEZ: So your best was leaving and your worst was coming?

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USS AZ_OHC_#337_Lonie Lee Copeland_11-00-92

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MR. COPELAND: But I got over that after the war started. My morale built back up and I was alright.

MR. MARTINEZ: Well we'd like to thank you for the interview Lonie. I learned a lot.

MR. COPELAND: I thank all of y'all.

MR. MARTINEZ: I think you've come home.

MR. COPELAND: Yep.

[END AUDIO]